

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 STATE 175106
ORIGIN INR-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 NEA-10 ISO-00 SIG-03 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 ACDA-12 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /102 R

SECRET

DRAFTED BY INR/REA: JSYLVESTER:JM
APPROVED BY INR/DDR: MPACKMAN
EA: KQUINN
EUR/WE: MCRAMERUS
NEA/INS: PWLANDE
EUR/NE: WNEWLIN
EUR/SOV: KBROWN
EUR/NE: DWOOLFLEY

-----099036 120558Z /23

R 112228Z JUL 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO USLO PEKING
INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY RANGOON
AMEMBASSY SEOUL
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY SUVA
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 175106

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY
AMEMBASSY MANILA

CINCPAC HONOLULU HAWAII 0000

S E C R E T STATE 175106

NOFORN CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: PFOR, VM, CH

SUBJECT: SINO-VIETNAMESE TENSION--THE PERSPECTIVE FROM
PEKING

1. FOLLOWING IS INR ANALYSIS OF JULY 10 FOR YOUR INFORMA-
TION:

2. CONCLUSIONS

IN ITS DISPUTE WITH HANOI, PEKING IS MOTIVATED PRIMARILY
BY ITS CONCERN OVER VIETNAM'S AMBITIONS IN THE AREA AND THE
GROWING CLOSENESS BETWEEN VIETNAM AND THE SOVIET UNION.
THESE CONSIDERATIONS HAVE INTENSIFIED CHINA'S PERCEPTION
THAT IT IS THREATENED WITH ENCIRCLEMENT. TO BLUNT VIET-
NAMESE AMBITIONS, PEKING HAS SUPPORTED CAMBODIA AND HAS ALSO
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 175106

PURSUED ITS QUARREL WITH HANOI BY ECONOMIC, DIPLOMATIC, AND
PROPAGANDA MEANS.

3. NEVERTHELESS, WE BELIEVE THAT CHINA WILL NOT:

--ATTACK VIETNAM, AN ACTION THAT WOULD RISK SOVIET INTER-
VENTION (CHINA MAY RATTLE ITS SABER TO DIVERT VIETNAMESE
TROOPS FROM CAMBODIA);

--COMMIT TROOPS TO THE DEFENSE OF CAMBODIA, ALTHOUGH IT
MAY INCREASE AID AND THE NUMBER OF MILITARY AND TECHNICAL
ADVISORS;

--SEVER DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH HANOI; AFTER ALL, CHINA
HAS MAINTAINED STATE RELATIONS EVEN WITH THE SOVIET UNION.

4. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE BELIEVE THAT CHINA WILL:

--CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN TIES WITH THE ASEAN COUNTRIES IN
AN ATTEMPT TO CONTAIN VIETNAM AND THUS LIMIT THE SPREAD
OF HANOI'S AND MOSCOW'S INFLUENCE IN THE AREA;

--STEP UP EFFORTS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH ALL FRIENDLY
COUNTRIES USEFUL AGAINST THE USSR;

--INCREASE EFFORTS TO MODERNIZE ITS DEFENSE BY BUYING
MILITARY AND INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY FROM THE WEST AND JAPAN.

5. CHINA'S VIEW OF VIETNAM

CHINA IS ALARMED BY WHAT IT REGARDS AS HANOI'S DESIRE TO
ESTABLISH "REGIONAL HEGEMONY" OVER INDOCHINA, AS EVI-
DENCED BY VIETNAMESE ACTIONS IN LAOS AND TOWARD CAMBODIA.
PEKING'S VIEW IS COLORED, MOREOVER, BY INDIGNATION AND
FRUSTRATION. THE CHINESE CLAIM THAT THEY HAVE GIVEN
VIETNAM MORE THAN 10 BILLION DOLLARS OF MILITARY AND
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 STATE 175106

ECONOMIC AID (OUR BEST INFORMATION INDICATES 5 BILLION
DOLLARS) SINCE THE EARLY 1950S. YET, PEKING SEES HANOI
CONTINUING TO PURSUE POLICIES SURE TO ANGER CHINA.

6. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PEKING AND HANOI LONG SIMMERED
BELOW THE SURFACE, BUT THEY ERUPTED INTO OPEN HOSTILITY
AFTER THE ALLEGED MISTREATMENT AND EXODUS OF ETHNIC
CHINESE FROM VIETNAM. PEKING RESPONDED FIRST BY MAKING
POLEMICAL ATTACKS, THEN BY CLOSING VIETNAM'S CONSULATES
IN CHINA, AND MOST RECENTLY BY CUTTING OFF AID ENTIRELY.

7. CHINA'S EFFORTS TO PREVENT HANOI'S SUBVERSION OF
CAMBODIA

PEKING IS CONCERNED THAT HANOI WILL FORCE CAMBODIA TO
BECOME A SATELLITE LIKE LAOS, EITHER THROUGH DIRECT ATTACK
OR THROUGH SUPPORT TO AN ALTERNATIVE CAMBODIAN LEADERSHIP
SYMPATHETIC TO VIETNAM. TO BLOCK THIS ATTEMPT, PEKING
SINCE 1975 HAS EXPRESSED STRONG SUPPORT FOR THE POL POT
LEADERSHIP, DESPITE PRIVATE COMMENTS COMPLAINING OF ITS
EXTREME POLICIES. IN ADDITION TO POLITICAL SUPPORT,

PEKING HAS PROVIDED TECHNICIANS AND SOME MILITARY AID,
INCLUDING LONG-RANGE ARTILLERY PIECES WHICH HAVE ENABLED
THE CAMBODIANS TO INFLICT HEAVY DAMAGE ON THE VIETNAMESE
IN THE BORDER FIGHTING.

8. WHEN THE CAMBODIAN-VIETNAMESE CONFLICT INTENSIFIED
LATE LAST YEAR, PEKING SHOWED SYMPATHY FOR CAMBODIA BUT
AVOIDED CRITICISM OF HANOI; THIS TACTIC WAS PRESUMABLY
DESIGNED NOT TO DRIVE HANOI FURTHER TOWARD MOSCOW.
BUT BY LATE APRIL, PEKING APPARENTLY DECIDED THAT VIETNAM
WAS IRREVOCABLY SET ON AN ANTI-CHINESE PATH.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 05 STATE 175106

9. CHINA HAS DIRECTED ITS PUBLIC FIRE MOSTLY AT HANOI'S TREATMENT OF ETHNIC CHINESE. THE LARGER PURPOSE OF THE CRITICISM, HOWEVER, IS TO DISCOURAGE VIETNAM'S PERCEIVED EFFORT TO SUBDUE CAMBODIA AND TO CAUSE HANOI TO HAVE SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH MOSCOW. HOWEVER, HANOI HAS NOT BOWED TO THIS PRESSURE. ON THE CONTRARY--TO THE HEIGHTENED ANGER OF CHINA--IN JUNE IT STEPPED-UP ITS MILITARY EFFORT AGAINST CAMBODIA AND APPEARED TO MOVE EVEN CLOSER TO MOSCOW.

10. EVACUATION OF ETHNIC CHINESE FROM VIETNAM

WHEN THE ETHNIC CHINESE IN VIETNAM BEGAN TO FLEE IN APRIL (OVER 140,000 HAVE CROSSED INTO CHINA NOW), THE PRC ANNOUNCED PLANS TO EVACUATE THEM AND IN JUNE SENT TWO PASSENGER SHIPS FOR THEM. DIFFERENCES IMMEDIATELY AROSE OVER EVACUATION PROCEDURES, HOWEVER, THE TWO SHIPS HAVE BEEN WAITING OFF THE COAST OF VIETNAM FOR THREE WEEKS.

11. THE TALKS REMAIN DEADLOCKED; CHINA INSISTS THAT IT, NOT VIETNAM, WILL DECIDE WHO WILL BE EVACUATED. IT SEEMS LIKELY, HOWEVER, THAT EVENTUALLY SOME SORT OF AGREEMENT WILL BE REACHED, AND THAT A LARGE NUMBER OF CHINESE WILL BE EVACUATED TO CHINA. THE CHINESE WILL BE CAREFUL HOW HARD THEY PRESS THEIR SUPPORT FOR THESE OVERSEAS CHINESE IN ORDER NOT TO SCARE THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN GOVERNMENTS WHICH ARE SENSITIVE ABOUT THEIR OWN LARGE CHINESE MINORITIES.

12. OTHER AREAS OF TENSION

LAND BORDER. THERE HAVE BEEN NO MAJOR BORDER DISAGREEMENTS BETWEEN CHINA AND VIETNAM, BUT HANOI NOW CONTENTS THAT CHINA ILLEGALLY CLAIMS SMALL AREAS ON THE BORDER. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE OF SUBSTANTIAL MILITARY BUILD-UP ON EITHER

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 06 STATE 175106

SIDE OF THE BORDER, BUT BOTH SIDES HAVE TAKEN STEPS TO

IMPROVE SURVEILLANCE AND WARNING. HOWEVER, THERE HAVE BEEN REPEATED (THOUGH UNCONFIRMED) REPORTS OF LOW-LEVEL CLASHES ALONG THE BORDER. RECENTLY, THERE HAVE BEEN MINOR INCIDENTS AS ETHNIC CHINESE FLED TO CHINA.

13. DISPUTED ISLANDS. CHINA ASSERTED ITS CLAIM TO THE PARACELS IN 1974 BY FORCEFULLY DISPLACING THE SMALL SOUTH

VIETNAMESE GARRISON THERE, AN ACTION RESENTED BY HANOI. DESPITE HONG KONG PRESS REPORTS THAT VIETNAM MAY TRY TO RETAKE THESE ISLANDS, AND DESPITE RECENTLY INCREASED CHINESE AIR SURVEILLANCE OF THEM, WE HAVE NO INDICATION THAT EITHER SIDE INTENDS TO RESORT TO FORCE.

14. CHINA ALSO CLAIMS THE SPRATLY ISLANDS FARTHER TO THE SOUTH, SOME OF WHICH ARE HELD BY VIETNAM, BUT PEKING IS UNLIKELY TO TRY TO ENFORCE THIS CLAIM AT PRESENT. PEKING PROBABLY REALIZES THAT THE VIETNAMESE ARE WELL PREPARED TO DEFEND THE ISLANDS THEY OCCUPY. CHINA MAY ALSO BE CONCERNED OVER ITS RELATIONS WITH THE PHILIPPINES, WHICH ALSO CLAIMS THE ISLANDS AND HOLDS SOME OF THEM. (TAIWAN IS ANOTHER CLAIMANT WITH A MILITARY PRESENCE ON ONE ISLAND THERE.)

15. LAOS. PEKING'S CONCERN ABOUT THE VIETNAMESE AND SOVIET ROLE IN LAOS MAY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO ITS RECENT DECISION TO PULL ITS ROAD-BUILDING TROOPS OUT OF THE NORTHERN PART OF LAOS; THIS ACTION LEFT UNCOMPLETED THE LINK BETWEEN THE CHINESE-BUILT NETWORK AND LUANG PRABANG. THIS GAP LIMITS THE ACCESS FROM THE VIETNAMESE-CONTROLLED SOUTH TO THE CHINESE-INFLUENCED NORTH AND HELPS PRESERVE CHINA'S ASCENDANCY IN THAT PART OF LAOS ALONG ITS OWN
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 07 STATE 175106

BORDER.

16. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE US

SINCE BOTH HANOI AND PEKING NOW FEEL MORE BELEAGUERED, THEY ARE SEEKING TO IMPROVE THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE US AS WELL AS ASEAN AND THE WEST GENERALLY. PEKING SHOULD WELCOME BETTER US-VIETNAM TIES IN ORDER TO DIMINISH SOVIET LEVERAGE ON HANOI, BUT IN PRACTICE CHINA WILL PROBABLY RESENT US GESTURES TO VIETNAM, EQUATING THEM WITH MOVES ON DETENTE WITH THE USSR. IF THE CHINA-VIETNAM QUARREL HEATS UP, THE PRC MAY FEEL MORE PRESSURE TO ACHIEVE NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH THE US.

17. AS FOR THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES, AT PRESENT THEY ARE PLEASED THAT THE VIETNAMESE ARE SO DIVERTED BY THEIR DIFFICULTIES WITH CHINA AND CAMBODIA THAT THEY POSE NO IMMEDIATE THREAT TO THE ASEAN STATES. IF THE CHINA-VIETNAM DISPUTE ESCALATES, AND PARTICULARLY IF THE SOVIET ROLE IN VIETNAM INCREASES, WE WOULD EXPECT SOUTHEAST ASIAN CAPITALS TO BECOME INCREASINGLY WORRIED. AS THEIR CONCERN OVER BIG POWER RIVALRY IN THEIR AREA MOUNTS, THEY WILL LOOK TO THE US ONCE AGAIN FOR SECURITY AND AID. CHRISTOPHER

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE175106
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: JSYLVESTER:JM
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X2
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780284-1155
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780772/aaaacivo.tel
Line Count: 277
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: f47e4977-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN INR
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2046108
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SINO-VIETNAMESE TENSION--THE PERSPECTIVE FROM PEKING
TAGS: PFOR, PEPR, VM, CH
To: PEKING
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/f47e4977-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014